

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PLOS, EFIS, PINT, GY, NS
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY COMMENTS ON SURINAM-GUYANA RELATIONS

REF: (A) PARAMARIBO 0003, (B) GEORGETOWN 356, (C) GEORGETOWN 0387
(D) GEORGETOWN 0389

1. THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN SURINAM AND GUYANA, ALONG WITH
VARIOUS PROBLEMS REVOLVING AROUND FISHING RIGHTS IN THE TWO
NATIONS' TERRITORIAL WATERS, PROVOKED COMMENTS DURING THE
CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET DEBATE IN GEORGETOWN ON MARCH 3.
CLINTON COLLYMORE OF THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE
PARTY (PPP) CHARGED THAT THE GOG, BY ITS SEIZURES OF SURINAMESE-
BASED FISHING TRAWLERS, HAD PROVOKED THE SURINAMERS TO REFUSE
TO RENEW PERMITS FOR GUYANESE FISHERMEN ON THE CORENTYNE RIVER.
COLLYMORE FELT THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD REACH AN AGREEMENT
WHEREBY THE GOG WOULD RELEASE THE SURINAMESE-BASED TRAWLERS
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AND SURINAM WOULD PERMIT GUYANESE TO RESUME FISHING IN
THE CORENTYNE RIVER.

2. RESPONDING TO COLLYMORE'S CHARGES, MINISTER OF ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES HUBERT JACK BRANDED THEM AS IGNORANT AND
IRRESPONSIBLE AND CAUTIONED THAT SUCH REMARKS COULD DO HARM
TO GUYANA. HE RECALLED THAT GUYANESE BOATS HAD STRAYED

INTO SURINAM'S WATERS IN THE PAST AND HAD BEEN SEIZED AND SIMILARLY THE GUYANESE HAD SEIZED THE SURINAMESE VESSELS IN QUESTION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SEIZURE OF TRESPASSING SHIPS WAS RECOGNIZED AS THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT OF A COUNTRY AND THAT IN THIS CASE IT HAD BEEN DONE TO PROTECT A VALUABLE NATURAL RESOUC--FISH. THE MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SURINAM'S SEIZURE OF GUYANESE BOATS COULD BE CONSIDERED A REACTION TO THE GOG SEIZURE.

3. JACK TRACED THE HISOTRY OF THE DISPUTE BACK TO THE UNSIGNED PRE-WORLD WAR TWO AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND THE DUTCH, WHICH DECREED THAT THE ENTIRE CORENTYNE RIVER, UP TO THE HIGH WATER MARK, WAS PART OF SURINAM, WHEREAS GUYANESE SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE NEW RIVER TRIANGLE IN THE EXTREME SOUTHEAST OF GUYANA WAS RECOGNIZED. JACK ASSERTED THAT "THE PEOPLE OF SURINAM HAVE SOUGHT TO QUESTION THE SECOND PART OF THE AGREEMENT WHILE HOLDING ON THE BENEFITS OF THE FIRST". HE EMPHASIZED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONTINUING WITH SURINAM AND STATED THAT HE HOPED THE OPPOSITION WOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT A SOLID FRONT WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON THE ISSUE.

4. COMMENT: THE MARCH 3 REMARKS WERE THE FIRST REAL PARTISAN CRITIQUE AND DEFENSE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF RELATIONS WITH SURINAM. DESPITE JACK'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSERTIONS THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SURINAM ARE CONTINUING, THE EMBASSY SEES NO EVIDENCE OF MOVEMENT BY THE GOG TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. THE GOG IS ENGAGED IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON THE 1978 BUDGET, AND FOREIGN MINISTER JACKSON, WHO WOULD BE THE LOGICAL PERSON TO GET GUYANA/SURINAM TALKS MOVING AGAIN, IS TRAVELLING AND MAY NOT RETURN FOR TWO WEEKS.
BURKE

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